[Translation]

SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI (Shimla): Mr. Speaker, Sir, due to the recent heavy rains in Himachal Pradesh the road approaches to the initerior villages of my constituency have been cut off. The apple crops are rotting due to the blockage of roads and the people there are suffering great hardship. The Government of the State does not have resources for opening the road. Many people and cattle have died and great damage has been done by the rains. The Government of Himachal Pradesh had demanded an assistance of Rs. 400 crores. Everywhere in the districts of Sirmour, Solan and Simla, there are signs of ravages. The apple crops and vegetables are held up and are not reaching the markets. I request that the Government of India should send a team to Himachal Pradesh to make an assessment of the damage done and provide necessary assistance. The Ministers of Tourism and Parliamentary Affairs are present in the House and they should assure us that something would be done to provide relief to those people.

SHRI BHAKT CHARAN DAS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we are going to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of 50 years of our independence, in one corner of the country, even ordinary medicines are not available. In my constituency, more than 300 persons have died and more than 1200 are ill. Yesterday's New Delhi Times has carried this news and I had also given a notice in this regard about a week back. However, the matter could not be raised in the din and noise of the House. Today morning I sent a notice to your office giving a list of the people who have died, Blockwise and village-wise. Sir, it is not something new for the people of Kalahandi to die of diseases. People have been dying there ever since 1985. The communication system of 1500 villages gets cut-off. There are small dispensaries situated at distances of 40 kms. and the people cannot reach there for absence of transport. They cannot even go to their offices. We have not been able to provide the facility of doctors in the villages of our country even after 50 years of independence with the result that people die in hundreds like insects even in small ailments. Presently, 1200 to 1500 people are lying ill. The arrangements for medicines are so poor in that area that even preventive medicines are not available to the people. The medicines that are distributed in the Blocks are very insufficient. I therefore, urge the Government to arrange supplies of adequate quantity of medicines and also provide the facility of doctors.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: You have made you point. Shri Sharad Pattanayak has made his point.

[Translation]

SHRI BHAKT CHARAN DAS: Sir, I request the Government to pay proper attention to this.

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY (Chhapra): I want to draw the attention of the Petroleum Minister to a special issue. Bitumen is being supplied to Bihar for the last five years by Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum and other Companies. Reports have come from 54 districts of Bihar of a scam to the tune of Rs. 100 to 200 crores in the supply of bitumen through some middlemen of the Government. The supplies are made by the Central Government. Bihar has a population of ten crores ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: It appears we will have to convert this House into Bihar Assembly !

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Sir, this country will have to worry about Bihar. Conditions in Bihar are very bad and this is a big scam that ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: A scam of a magnitude involving crores of rupees ... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: I demand that an enquiry be instituted in this important matter.

SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE (Jabalpur): Mr. Speaker, A committee was constituted by the Labour Department of Madhya Pradesh to consider the problems of *bidi* workers. The Committee submitted its report in December, 1995. It is an all India issue because the *bidi* workers are not confined to Madhya Pradesh, but are spread all over the country. The findings of the Committee are: Tendu leaves are supplied in short quantity, the quality of Tendu leaves in bad, tobacco and thread are not supplied free of cost, wages are not paid in time, records of *bidi* workers are not maintained, *bidi* workers are not given wage slips, there is inadequate representation to workers in expert committees. The committee did not even make an effort to probe into the implementation of the schemes of Provident Fund, Employees State Insurance Scheme, medical facilities and welfare schemes.

I want to request the Government to take proper steps for improving the condition of *bidi* workers.

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH (Vidisha): Mr. Speaker, Sir, even though the Indian markets are flooded with foreign products, there are many Indian commodities which are still popular in foreign countries. Rice, particularly Basmati rice, hods a pride of place. In foreign countries, specially in U.S.A. and U.K., Basmati rice is in great demand. Our exports of rice to foreign companies amount to about Rs. 950 crores. To cash on the popularity of Basmati rice, some foreign companies have started their own production of Indian style Basmati under several names such as Kasmati, Jasmati etc. This has created a piquant situation.

Sir, this has two implications firstly, our exports are being adversely affected because these foreign companies are selling the rice, which is a product of America, in the name of Basmati. Secondly the attraction towards Basmati rice is diminishing. Therefore, I request the Government to pass some law whereby our *Basmati* is protected and other Indian products also get protection so that the foreign companies may not produce and sell their own products in the name of our products and the country's exports may not suffer.

SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA (Ferozabad): Hon. Mr. Speaker, the area between Faizabad and Agra in my constituency has suffered great damage from the floods in the rivers Yamuna and Chambal. Nearly 10,000 cattle have died and six thousand houses have been destroyed. People have become homeless and are arranging for shelters by putting up small tents. The Prime Minister had announced relief for the flood-striken people and Members in the House had also pleaded for it. The Government of Uttar Pradesh have asked for monetary assistance. It should not be delayed.

Sir, many people have died there. The Prime Minister of the country had given an assurance that compensation will be paid to the families of the deceased. People are dying in large number due to non-availability of medicines. Epidemic diseases are spreading, taking a big toll of life in absence of medicines. I request the Government of India to provide full compensation to the families of the deceased and make adequate arrangements for supply of medicines.

SHRI JAGDAMBI PRASAD YADAV (Gonda): Hon. Mr. Speaker, Sir, An agitation has started in Bihar from today in favour of the demand for Vananchal. This is the beginning of the blockade. The Prime Minister announced the formation of Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh with an eye on the coming elections. The struggle for Vananchal has been going on for so many years. From administrative point of view and from every other angle, it can become a viable state and should, therefore, be conceded as a full-fledged state. Hon. President had mentioned this in his speech also ...*(Interruptions)* formation of Uttarakhand was announced, but there was no announcement for Vananchal due to which the people of that region are greatly agitated. If the Government do not announce it early, I am afraid the agitation might turn violent causing much damage. ...*(Interruptions)*. The Government should pay attention to this issue.

SHRI R.L.P. VERMA (Kodarma): Mr. Speaker, there is discrimination against the candidates of S.C., S.T. and O.B.C. in all the examinations held by the Union Public Service Commission. For instance, in the examinations held in 1994-95 and 1996, only 22 per cent O.B.C. candidates were taken as against the reservation of 27 per cent for them. In the Civil Services examinations of 1994, only 25 per cent candidates were cleared. The O.B.C. candidates who qualify in the open competition are added to the reserved category. What will be their future? There does not appear to be any transparency in the implementation of the Government policy. The Railway Board results declared recently in Bangalore reflect adequate transparency.

In the policy that has been notified by the Government, I want that rule 15(1) of the 1994 Notification should be nullified and the interview marks should be placed at 100 instead of 300.

SHRI SUKH LAL KUSHWAHA (Satna): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the situation in village Patra falling under the Development Block of Amarpatan in my constituency. It is a forest area, inhabited by Adivasis. Between 1991 and 1994, Government officers and workers have misappropriated Rs 20 lakhs by preparing fake bills. Thumb impressions of minors were taken and money withdrawn in their names. Officers who tried to enquire into this racket have been transferred. Those involved in this scandal have got the protection of the Government. I want to request the hon. Minister to institute a high level enquiry and arrest and punish the guilty. The Government money which has been drawn in the name of Adivasis for Jeewan Dhara wells and Indira Awas should be immediately returned to the Adivasis.

[English]

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh): Sir, there is a new dimension with regard to corruption—what we find in the functioning of banks in some parts of Orissa. Firstly, there is not enough money available in banks even to clear the salary bill of the Government employees, leave apart developmental expenditure bills, and thereby the developmental activities are adversely affected. Secondly, there are also shortages found that too increasingly in the stamped, sealed and tied note bundles issued on withdrawal by the depositors. This is a serious matter and also affects the credibility of the banks.

I would, therefore, request the Government of India, particularly the Finance Ministry—the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is present here; he should convey it personally to the Finance Minister—to look into this and remedial measures should be taken immediately.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Das, he has already raised the issue of shortage of currency notes. You can simply associate yourself.

PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS (Jalpaiguri): Sir, we are facing much difficulties for want of currency notes of